

4/22/44

CAPTAIN ROBERT HOLMES SMITH, U.S. NAVY (DECEASED)

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DM-23

Captain Smith was born in Harrellsville, North Carolina, August 8, 1898. He attended the Rocky Mount High School, Rocky Mount, North Carolina, and the Staunton Military Academy, Staunton, Virginia, before entering the Naval Academy from the Fourth District of North Carolina in 1916. He was a member of the class of 1920 which was graduated in June, 1919. He made the cruises in 1917 and 1918 in the U.S.S. NEBRASKA and U.S.S. ARIZONA with the Atlantic Fleet. He was commissioned Ensign, June 7, 1919, and his subsequent advancements were: Lieutenant (junior grade), June 7, 1922; Lieutenant, June 7, 1925; Lieutenant Commander, July 1, 1935; Commander, April 1, 1940; and Captain, June 18, 1942.

During the three years following his graduation from Annapolis, Captain Smith had consecutive duty in the U.S. Ships GEORGE WASHINGTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, KANSAS, BRANCH, HERNDON and CONVERSE.

He was under instruction in submarines at the Submarine Base, New London, Connecticut, from September, to December, 1922. After completing that course, he served in and commanded submarines in the Atlantic area and the Canal Zone until May, 1931. He served in the executive department of the Naval Academy from May, 1931, until May, 1934, and from June of that year until May, 1937, he commanded the U.S.S. BONITA, fleet submarine.

Captain Smith served in the Division of Fleet Training, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, D.C., from May, 1937, until June, 1939, and was navigator of the U.S.S. PENNSYLVANIA, flagship, U.S. Fleet, from June, 1939, until November, 1940. From December, 1940, until April, 1942, he was operations officer on staff Commander, Submarines, Patrol Force, (later renamed Submarines Atlantic Fleet) and as Chief of that staff. He was detached from that duty April 2, 1942, and reported April 16, 1942, to the Navy Yard, Mare Island, California, for duty in connection with fitting out a submarine

tender. When that vessel was commissioned on May 1, 1942, he went aboard as her commanding officer.

Captain Smith was killed while a passenger aboard a transport seaplane operated for the Naval Air Transport Service which was lost on January 21, 1943, near Boonville, California, on a flight from Pearl Harbor to San Francisco.

Captain Smith had the Victory Medal, Atlantic Fleet Clasp; the American Defense Service Medal, with Bronze "A" (Bronze "A" for service in a vessel operating in actual or potential belligerent contact with the Axis Forces in the Atlantic Ocean) and was eligible for the Asiatic-Pacific Area Campaign Medal.

A Destroyer, the U.S.S. ROBERT H. SMITH, has been named in his honor. His widow, Mrs. Robert H. Smith, of 238 King George Street, Annapolis, Maryland, will sponsor the vessel when she is launched at the Bath Iron Works Corporation, Bath, Maine.

1/23/43

CAPTAIN ROBERT HOLMES SMITH, U.S. NAVY

Captain Smith was born in ~~Havel~~Wellsville, North Carolina, August 8, 1898. He attended the Rocky Mount High School, Rocky Mount, North Carolina and the Staunton Military Academy, Staunton, Virginia, and entered the Naval Academy from North Carolina in 1916, a member of the class of 1920 which was graduated in June 1919. After graduation he served in the transport GEORGE WASHINGTON until December of that year when he was transferred to the U.S.S. SOUTH CAROLINA.

During the next three years, he had consecutive tours of duty in the U. S. Ships, KANSAS, PENNSYLVANIA, BRANCH, HERNDON and CONVERSE. He was under instruction in submarines at the Submarine Base, New London, Connecticut from September 1922 until January, 1923.

After completing that course he served in and commanded submarines in the Atlantic area and in the Canal Zone until 1931.

He served in the Executive Department of the Naval Academy from May, 1931, until May, 1934, and in June of that year, he assumed command of the U.S.S. BONITA. He served in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department for two years and had duty as Navigator of the U.S.S. PENNSYLVANIA from June, 1939, until November, 1940. In December, 1940, he reported as Operations Officer on Staff Commander and Submarine Patrol Force, and in January, 1941, he was transferred to duty as Chief of Staff and Aid, Commander, Submarines, Atlantic Fleet. He was detached from that duty in January, 1942, and assumed command of a vessel.

Captain Smith has the Victory Medal, Atlantic Fleet Clasp, and the American Defense Service Medal-Fleet Clasp.

His usual residence is 307 Hammond Street, Rocky Mount, North Carolina.

The address of his wife, Mrs. Margaret B. Smith is Suite 129, 420 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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NAVY DEPARTMENT

IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
PRESS AND RADIO

JANUARY 23, 1943

TRANSPORT SEAPLANE STILL MISSING

Continuing widespread search for the missing transport seaplane, operating for the Naval Air Transport Service on a flight from Pearl Harbor to San Francisco, has failed to reveal any trace of the aircraft up to the present time.

The reported passenger list indicates that the following Naval Officers were aboard the missing plane:

Rear Admiral Robert H. English, U.S.N. (Usual residence: Warrenton, Georgia. His wife, Mrs. Eloise Walker English, now resides at 4445 Lowell Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.)

✓ Captain Robert Holmes Smith, U.S.N. (Usual address: 307 Hammond Street, Rocky Mount, North Carolina. His wife, Mrs. Frances B. Smith, now resides at 120 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, Massachusetts.)

Captain Robert E. Thomas, Civil Engineer Corps, U.S.N. (Usual address: 614 Whitman Street, Rockford, Illinois. His wife, Mrs. Helen L. Thomas, now resides at 2828 40th Avenue, W, Seattle, Washington.)

Captain Donald C. Godwin, U.S.N. (Usual address: 505 W. Main Street, Williamston, North Carolina. His wife, Mrs. Hazel M. Godwin, now resides at 4626 7th Avenue, Los Angeles, California.)

Commander John J. Crane, U.S.N. (Usual address: 1907 Miami Street, Toledo, Ohio. His wife, Mrs. Imogene St. Clair Crane, now resides at 103 Bella Vista Way, Vallejo, California.)

Commander Francis L. Black, U.S.N. (Usual address: 1861 Moore Street, San Diego, California. His wife, Mrs. Anna G. Black, now resides at 7 Dana Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts.)

Commander William G. Myers, U.S.N. (Usual address: 2709 Nicholas Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. His wife, Mrs. Susan Gladding Myers, now resides at 1327 Monroe Street, N.E., Washington, D.C.)

Lieutenant Commander John O. R. Coll, U.S.N. (Usual address: 625 E. Maple Street, Jeffersonville, Indiana. His wife, Mrs. Margaret Coll, now resides at 3133 Front Street, San Diego, California.)

Lieutenant Commander George R. Stone, U.S.N. (Usual address: 303 Marion Avenue, Big Rapids, Michigan. His wife, Mrs. Jean Richards Stone, now resides at 925 Kingstone Avenue, River Forest, Illinois.)

Lieutenant (junior grade) Edna Owella Morrow, U.S. Navy Nurse Corps. (Usual address: 45 S. Greenwood Street, Pasadena, California.)

The crew of nine is listed as:

Robert McNair Elzey, (Captain), 229 Lenox Street, Palo Alto, California.

Orvan K. Judd, (First Officer), 2414 California Street, Berkeley, California.

John R. Maynard, (Second Officer), 508 Lincoln Avenue, Alameda, California.

George H. Aabel, (Third Officer), 1255 Crane Street, Menlo Park, California.

Leo A. Mackota, (First Engineer), 418 Bosworth Street, San Francisco, California.

John J. Eagan, Sr. (Second Engineer), Apartment 211, 916 Union Street, Alameda, California.

Clarence P. Thompson, (First Radio Officer), 1477 Navy Street, San Leandro, California.

George W. Angus, (Second Radio Officer), 1462 Trestle Glen Road, Oakland, California.

John G. Hill, (Flight Steward), 1100 Cordilleras Avenue, San Carlos, California.

(Biographies are available in Reference Section, Office of Public Relations. Photographs available in Pictorial Section.)

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**PLEASE SUBMIT IN DUPLICATE**

**COMMANDER SUBMARINES, ATLANTIC FLEET  
U.S.S. VIXEN, Flagship**

The Bureau of Navigation is frequently called upon to furnish news releases for officers in connection with their service activities and assignments. It would therefore be appreciated if you would submit this form to the Bureau of Navigation, properly filled out, as soon as practicable.

Date submitted 19 December 1941

Name SMITH Robert Holmes  
(Surname) (First) (Middle)

Rank Commander

Home address 307 Hammond Street, Rocky Mount, N.C.

Date and place of birth August 8, 1898 Hawellsville, N.C.

Father's name Charles Holmes Smith  
(Rank, if in Army, Navy, Marine Corps, etc.)

Mother's name Mrs. Charles Holmes Smith

Mother's maiden name Lillian Valentine

Schools attended prior to entering Naval Academy Rocky Mount High School,  
Staunton (va.) Military Academy

Naval Academy Class of 1920

While attending Naval Academy (Athletics, special achievements, literary societies, etc.)

- - - - -

Data concerning college attended if not Naval Academy graduate:

- - - - -

Married Yes (Maiden name of wife) Margaret Frances Bresnahan

of Medford, Mass. at San Francisco, Calif when 15 Jan. 1924

Names of children: Robert Holmes Smith, Jr. 16½ yrs  
John Valentine Smith 11½ yrs

(See reverse side)

Brief biography of career which would be of interest for press releases.

This to include information relative to:

- (a) Unusual assignments to special duties.
- (b) Transcripts of letters of commendation of special interest.
- (c) Participation in any naval or military campaigns or engagements.

List campaign badges or medals, citations and foreign decorations received.

Entered USNA June 1916, Graduated June 1919. Served after graduation in USAT George Washington, battleships and destroyers to August 1922.

Attended Submarine School, August 1922.

Served at sea in submarines to 1937

Commanded S-20 July 1928 - December 1930

Commanded R-18 December 1930 - May 1931

Commanded Bonita June 1934 - May 1937

Navigator of USS PENNSYLVANIA, June 1939 - November 1940

Dec. 1940 - Chief of Staff and Aide, Commander Submarines Atlantic Fleet.

Campaign Medals - Victory Medal - Atlantic Fleet.

Please submit in duplicate.

Date submitted **26 November, 1937.**

me **Smith** **Robert** **Holmes**  
(Surname) (First) (Middle)  
Rank **Lieutenant Commander, U.S. Navy**

Home address **307 Hammond Street, Rocky Mount, North Carolina**

Date and place of birth **8 August, 1898; Harrelsville, North Carolina**

Father's name **Smith, Charles Holmes**

Mother's name **Lillian V. Smith**

Mother's maiden name **Lillian Valentine**

Schools attended prior to entering Naval Academy: **Rocky Mount (N.C.)**

**High School, Staunton Military Academy** Class of **1916**

While attending Naval Academy (Athletics, special achievements,  
literary societies, etc.)

Married (Maiden name of wife) **Margaret Francis Bresnahan** of **Medford**  
**Massachusetts** at **San Francisco, California** when **15 Jan., 1934**

Names of children:

**Robert Holmes Smith, Jr.** **12½ years.**  
**John Valentine Smith** **7½ years.**

Member of the (Clubs, societies, organizations, etc.)

**Army Navy Country Club, Washington, D.C.**

(See reverse side)

Brief biography of career which would be of interest for press releases. This to include also information relative to:

- (a) Unusual assignments to special duties.
- (b) Transcripts of letters of commendation of special interest.
- (c) Participation in any naval or military campaigns or engagements.
- (d) List campaign badges or medals, citations and foreign decorations received.

**Entered U.S. Naval Academy, 17 June, 1916. Graduated (Class of 1920) 6 June, 1919.**

**Reported for first duty U.S.S. GEORGE WASHINGTON on 8 July, 1919. Then served in battleships SOUTH CAROLINA, KANSAS and PENNSYLVANIA until August 1921. Destroyers until August, 1922, and then reported to Submarine School, New London, Connecticut for a course of instruction. Served in submarines continuously on sea duty until May 1937. Commanded U.S.S. S-20, 1928-1931. Commanded U.S.S. BONITA 1934-1937.**

Signature.....

**Robert Holmes Smith**

NAVY DEPARTMENT

IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
PRESS AND RADIO

FEBRUARY 6, 1943

LAST RITES FOR CAPTAIN R. H. SMITH, U. S. N.

Funeral services for the late Captain Robert Holmes Smith, U.S.N., who was killed in the crash of a transport plane near San Francisco on January 21, will be held at the Fort Myer (Virginia) Chapel Tuesday, February 9, 1943, at 2 p.m.

Full military honors will be accorded and burial is to be in Arlington National Cemetery. Captain R. D. Workman, Chaplain Corps, U.S.N., is to officiate. Captain E. H. Bryant, U.S.N., will be the Escort Commander.

Honorary pallbearers will be Captain E. M. Tillson, U.S.N.; Captain H. L. Challenger, U.S.N.; Captain M. E. Curts, U.S.N.; Captain Merrill Comstock, U.S.N.; Commander M. Gilmore, U.S.N.; (Retired), and Commander S. W. DuBose, U.S.N.

His official address was 307 Hammond Street, Rocky Mount, North Carolina. His wife, Mrs. Frances B. Smith, now resides at 120 Memorial Drive, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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CAPTAIN ROBERT HENRI SMITH, UNITED STATES NAVY, ACTIVE, DECEASED

6 Aug 1898 Born in Harrellsville, North Carolina.

17 Jun 1916 Appointed a Midshipman from North Carolina 4th District.

29 May 1917 Joined U.S.S. MAMMACKA.

22 Aug Cruise completed.

7 Jun 1918 Joined U.S.S. ARIZONA.

30 Aug Cruise completed.

2 Jun 1919 Det. (Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md. and to tempo. duty U.S.S. LEVIATHAN. upon falling in with the U.S.S. GEORGE WASHINGTON, det. (U.S.S. LEVIATHAN) and to duty on U.S.S. GEORGE WASHINGTON. Det. Jun 6, Pro. Jul 7, Det. Jul 8, Rep. Jul 8.

6 Jun Commissioned regular Ensign from Jun 7, 1919.

7 Jun Accepted a pointment and executed oath of office.

3 Dec Det. (U.S.S. GEORGE WASHINGTON) and to the U.S.S. SOUTH CAROLINA. Det. Dec 5, Rep. Dec 9.

22 Sep 1920 Det. (U.S.S. SOUTH CAROLINA) and to the U.S.S. KANSAS for duty. Det. Sep 23, Rep. Sep 26.

3 Jun 1921 Det. (U.S.S. KANSAS) to duty on U.S.S. SPAIN BURGESS. Det. Jun 3, Pro. Jun 3, Rep. Jun 4.

10 Jun Det. (U.S.S. SPAIN BURGESS) to duty on U.S.S. PENNSYLVANIA. Det. Jun 9, Pro. Jun 9, Rep. Jun 14.

12 Aug Det. (U.S.S. PENNSYLVANIA) and to the U.S.S. BRANCH. Det. Aug 13, Pro. Aug 13, Rep. Aug 16.

6 Dec Det. (U.S.S. BRANCH) and to the U.S.S. BRANCH. Det. and Rep. Jan 3.

17 Jun 1922 Det. (U.S.S. BRANCH), and to duty on U.S.S. CORVETTES. Det. Jun 19, Pro. and Rep. Jun 20.

11 Aug Det. (U.S.S. CORVETTES) and to the U.S.S. CHARLES at Submarine Base, New London, Conn. for tempo. duty under instruction in submarines. Auth to delay until Sep 4, 1922. Det. Aug 21, Pro. Aug 22, Rep. Sep 4.

24 Nov Det. upon completion instruction (U.S.S. CHARLES) and to New London Ship and Engine Co., Groton, Conn. for duty conn. fitting out the S-34 and on board when commissioned. Det. Dec 23, Rep. Dec 23, I.C. Apr 23, 1923.

21 Dec Commissioned regular Lieut. (jg) from Jun 7, 1922. (No O & A).

28 Nov 1923 Det. (S-34).

27 Feb 1924 To S-34 for duty. Rep. Feb 27.

12 Jun Det. about Jun 23 (S-34) and to 11th Naval District, San Diego, Calif. for tempo. duty. Det. when govt. transportation available to Canal Zone (11th Nav. Dist.) and to Canal Zone, thence to the S-6 for duty. Det. Jan 25, Pro. Jun 27, Rep. Jun 30. Det. Jul 23, Rep. Jul 24. Det. Aug 11, Rep. Aug 15.

30 Jun 1925 Det. (C-6) and to the S-43 for duty. Det. Jul 22, Rep. Jul 22.  
 15 Sep Commissioned ad interim Lieut. from Jun 7, 1925.  
 Det. S-43 July 24, 1926.  
 1 Feb 1926 Commissioned regular Lieut. From Jun 7, 1925.  
 23 Jun U.S.S. CHAMBERLAIN. Rep. Sep 3, 1926, Det. Jun 25, 1927.  
 13 Jun 1927 Submarine Base, New London, Conn. Rep. Jun 25, 1927, Det. Jun 29, 1928.  
 24 Mar 1928 Command U.S.S. S-20. Rep. Jul 2, 1928, Det. Dec 10, 1930.  
 16 Oct 1930 Command U.S.S. R-18. Rep. Dec 10, 1930, Det. May 13, 1931.  
 14 Mar 1931 Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md. Rep. May 15, 1931, Det. May 21, 1934.  
 17 Feb 1934 Commanding U.S.S. BOMITA. Rep. Jun 9, 1934, Det. May 1, 1937.  
 20 Nov 1935 Commissioned ad interim Lieutenant Commander from Jul 1, 1935.  
 18 Feb 1936 Commissioned regular from July 1, 1935.  
 9 Jan 1937 Office of Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, D. C. Rep. May 10, 1937, Det. Jun 2, 1939.  
 24 Jan 1939 U.S.S. PENNSYLVANIA (Navigator). Rep. Jun 20, 1939, Det. Nov 22, 1940.  
 14 Jun 1940 Commissioned regular Commander from Apr 1, 1940.  
 7 Nov Duty connection fitting out recommissioned submarines, Fourth Naval District, Philadelphia, Pa. Rep. Nov 27, 1940, Det. Dec 4, 1940.  
 2 Dec Submarines, Patrol Force (Operations Officer on Staff of Commander). Rep. Dec 7, 1940, Det. Jan 31, 1941.  
 17 Jan 1941 Submarines, Atlantic Fleet (Operations Officer on Staff of Commander). (Change in title). Rep. Feb 1, 1941.  
 31 Jan Addl. duty: Chief of Staff and Aide, Commander Submarines, Atlantic Fleet. (change in title). Rep. Feb 11, 1941.  
 22 Nov Relieved of duty Staff, Commander, Submarines, Atlantic Fleet (Operations Officer); continue duty Chief of Staff and Aide, Commander, Submarines, Atlantic Fleet. Det. Jan 3, 1942.  
 10 Jan 1942 Chief of Staff and Aide, Commander Submarines, Atlantic Fleet. Rep. Jan 3, 1942, Det. Apr 2, 1942.  
 20 Mar Duty connection fitting out U.S.S. SPERRY, Navy Yard, Mare Island, Calif. Rep. Apr 16, 1942.  
 20 Mar Commanding U.S.S. SPERRY. Rep. May 1, 1942, I.C. May 1, 1942.  
 8 Sep Appointed by the President on Sep 8, 1942 Captain, for temporary service, to rank from Jun 18, 1942. Appointment not having been expressly declined, regarded as having been accepted for all purposes on Sep 8, 1942.

Qualified for command of submarines.  
 Completed course in submarine instruction.  
 Completed course in torpedo instruction.

Victory Medal - U.S.S. ARIZONA - June 7, 1918 to August 30, 1918  
Atlantic Fleet.

American Defense Service Medal - Fleet Clasp - 1939-1941.

Died:

21 January 1943 (Officially carried as missing from date of disappearance January 21, 1943 to date of notification February 1, 1943).

Place: Near Boonville, California.

Cause: Plane crash - not enemy action.

Next of kin: (Wife) Mrs. Robert H. Smith  
420 Monument Drive  
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Bronze Star

to

Capt. Robert Holmes Smith, USN  
(posthumously)

see

Capt. John D. Sweeney, USN

HEADQUARTERS  
FIRST NAVAL DISTRICT  
NORTH STATION OFFICE BUILDING  
150 CAUSEWAY STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE  
MAY 18, 1944

FOR RELEASE FRIDAY AFTERNOON PAPERS, MAY 19, 1944

The USS ROBERT H. SMITH, first destroyer so-named, will be launched at the Bath Iron Works, Bath, Maine, at about 4:30 Thursday afternoon, May 25.

Sponsor of this vessel will be Mrs. Robert Holmes Smith, of 238 King George Street, Annapolis, Maryland, wife of the late Navy Captain for whom the ship will be named. Captain Smith was killed in a Naval transport plane early last year.

The submarine USS SEA ROBIN, named for a fish, is also scheduled to be launched at the U. S. Navy Yard, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, on Thursday, May 25. This craft's sponsor will be Mrs. Homer Ambrose, wife of Commander Ambrose, Machinery Superintendent at the Portsmouth yard.

Captain Smith was born in Harrellsville, North Carolina, August 8, 1898, and entered the Naval Academy from the Fourth North Carolina District in 1916. He was a member of the Class of 1920, which was graduated from Annapolis in June, 1919. After instruction in submarines at the Submarine Base, New London, in 1922, Captain Smith served in and commanded submarines in the Atlantic area and Canal Zone until May, 1931, when he joined the executive department of the Naval Academy.

Leaving Annapolis in May, 1934, he commanded the USS BONITA, fleet submarine until May, 1937. During the next two years, Captain Smith served in the Division of Fleet Training, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Navy Department, Washington, D. C., and then became navigator of the USS PENNSYLVANIA, flagship of the U. S. Fleet, until November, 1940. He was operations officer on the staff of Commander, Submarines, Patrol Force (later renamed Submarines, Atlantic Fleet) and as chief of staff of that unit until April, 1942, when he reported at the Navy Yard, Mare Island, California, for duty in connection with the fitting out of a submarine tender. When that vessel was commissioned on May 1, 1942, he went aboard as her commanding officer.

Captain Smith was killed while a passenger aboard a transport seaplane of the Naval Air Transport Service when that plane was lost on January 21, 1943, near Boonville, California, on a flight from Pearl Harbor to San Francisco.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The launching of the ocean going rescue tug USS ATR-76 scheduled for Monday, May 22, has been postponed until a later date, at the Camden Shipbuilding and Marine Railway Company, Camden, Maine.

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